CHAPTER IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data collected and analyzed, there are four main topics being induced; namely, HR strategy, Recruitment, Selection, and Training. Each of these topics is worth detailed explanation and discussion in the next section.

HR Strategy

The first topic being induced is the HR strategy of foreign banks, which contains categories and concepts as Table 4.1 shows.

Table 4.1 HR strategy

Topic	Category	Concept
1. HR Strategy	1-1 IHRM Orientation	
	1-2 Authority	1-2-1 A matrix reporting line
		1-2-2 Top-down yet power of initiative to a certain degree

IHRM Orientation

According to Cullen & Parboteeah (2005, p.407), IHRM orientation refers to a company's basic tactics and philosophy for coordinating IHRM activities. Among these interviewed MNCs, most of them promote personnel mobility around the globe. In other words, they embrace the geocentric orientation. They believe that interflow of personnel among branches accompanying exchange of diverse practices, expertise, and viewpoints is very beneficial to operation of the company. Moreover, from company's standpoint, international transfers that offer opportunities of career development to employees can work as a way of retaining talents.

Nevertheless, there is one interviewee said that they rarely do cross-regional transfers, mainly due to the development of regional economy. For example, they are unlikely to

transfer a trader in New York who is not familiar with Asian stock market to the trade department in Taiwan. This company is more inclined to regiocentric orientation.

Authority

1. *A matrix reporting line*

No matter what kind of IHRM orientation these companies have, all of them structure their organizational framework hierarchically from HQs to regional HQs and then to each country. Accordingly, each employee in overseas branches has two superiors to report to. Take HR department for instance, HR personnel need to report to country head and regional HR head respectively.

2. *Top-down yet power of initiative to a certain degree*

Based on such organizational design, it is HQs that originates high-level HR strategy and pass it on to each region. Regions are given authority to fine-tune the strategy in accordance with regional characteristics. And finally, when each country put the HR policy into practice, they can adjust it to local conditions after gaining the approval from regional HQs.

Conversely speaking, countries can initiate proposals to regional HQs about HR budget or practices. According to D1, investment banks are usually less rigid than commercial banks in structures and regulations, so that the former has more power of initiatives than the latter. D1, as the country head, declared that although he dictates to the HR group in Hong Kong, he will tell them what he thinks is right or what he thinks does not work. He emphasized it's so-called "joint decision". E1 also used the expression that she can "offer suggestions" on local HR policy. This shows a more partner-like relationship between the overseas branch and regional HQs of investment banks, which is different from commercial banks who emphasize the idea of "getting approvals" from regional HQs.

Recruitment

The second topic is regarding recruitment practices of middle managers in overseas branches of foreign banks. There are three categories and eleven concepts to be discussed as Table 4.2 demonstrates.

Table 4.2 Recruitment

Topic	Category	Concept
2. Recruitment	2-1 Sources of Middle Managers	2-1-1 Local hires
		2-1-2 Expatriates
	2-2 Recruitment Channels	2-2-1 International transfer
		2-2-2 Promotion
		2-2-3 Website
		2-2-4 Headhunter
		2-2-5 Direct Contact
		2-2-6 Referral
		2-2-7 Media
	2-3 Recruitment Difficulties and Possible Solutions	2-3-1 Talent competition
		2-3-2 Lack of talents

Sources of Middle Managers

In this research, each interviewee is asked to identify who the middle managers are in his/ her company first, because each organization has its own unique ranking system. Just as D1 said that title doesn't really matter, it is so different from firm to firm. For example, D company gives middle managers titles as directors and associate directors, whereas another company names its middle managers as managers and assistant managers.

In spite of diversified designations given to middle managers, according to interviewees, the source of management at this level can be summarized as below:

1. Local hires

The majority of middle managers in these foreign banks are locals. Because mid-level management is mainly responsible for local markets, it is HCNs that are familiar with local culture, people and market conditions. Moreover, maintaining an expatriate is far more costly than hiring a local. The former needs extra expenses like accommodations and family relocation arrangement. Therefore, from the departmental budget perspective, it may be more cost-effective to hire HCNs as management at the middle level. The advantages of hiring local managers specified by interviewees are similar to the contention of Bohlander & Snell (2004).

2. Expatriates

Although expatriates constitute only a minor part of middle managers in Taiwan, they apply for internal transfer due to their interest in the vacancy here or concern for further development. So far, most expatriates come from Asia Pacific Region, especially Honk Kong, where these foreign banks have their regional HQs established. In more detail, they are nationals of Hong Kong, Australia, America, and Britain who used to work in regional HQs. Likewise, there are Taiwanese middle managers transferred to countries in Asia Pacific area, such as Singapore, Hong Kong, and Mainland China.

There are two types of expatriation. In one way, expatriates hold local contracts with no guarantee of return to where they come from and no time constraint of working locally. Another practice is expatriation of 2~3 years. After completing the expatriation, expatriates can either go back or be transferred to another place.

Despite most of these MNCs have geocentric attitudes; it is obvious that they are more polycentric or regiocentric when it comes to hiring middle managers. This has something to do with the duties of middle managers, and also with the cost effectiveness issue as interviewees explained. They further mentioned that only talents at the senior management level have the opportunity and necessity to be transferred around the globe. This finding

supports what Cullen & Parboteeah (2005) claimed that no one IHRM orientation perfectly fits a company's internationalization strategy/stage. Rather, each MNC selects an ideal approach as the general IHRM policy combining with specific IHRM procedures from other orientations to meet its individual strategic needs.

Recruitment Channels

Based on information gathered from interviews, common channels of recruiting middle managers can be roughly categorized into internal recruitment and external recruitment. Specifically, internal recruitment channels include international transfer and promotion; whereas external recruitment encompasses website, headhunter, direct contact, referral, and media. Overall, each company uses multiple channels for recruitment of middle managers. These channels are explained in more detail as follows:

1. International transfer

For companies that encourage international mobility among human resources, employees can search and apply for overseas posts of middle managers through companies' intranet easily. For example, C company which gives priority to internal recruitment always do job posting on the intranet first. It won't announce the vacancy to external job seekers until there's no appropriate internal candidate appear after one or two weeks. Moreover, some interviewees also stated that international transfer within the corporation can make sure the transferee fits the company culture and value, and can meet the developmental needs of employees. These statements correspond to the main advantages of recruiting expatriates internally proposed by Monks et al. (2001).

Furthermore, most interviewed companies have the HR departments in both countries where the transferee leave and leave for to deal with administrative arrangements. However, one company specially establishes a coordination center called "International Mobility" to serve all overseas branches and to take charge of all the necessary administrative procedures,

thus local HR can focus on local recruitment work only.

2. Promotion

Besides international transfer, promotion is another way of internal recruitment of middle managers. In foreign companies, as long as an employee is capable, he can be promoted to a higher post very promptly. It's not weird at all to see a young man at his late 20's or early 30's to serve the post of middle managers in overseas branches.

3. Website

This refers to internet of the company and websites of job banks, which external applicants can get access to. Every company releases the latest information about job postings on its website. However, B1 argued that there wouldn't be too many external applicants utilizing the company's global website for vacancy retrieve. Speaking of using websites for recruitment, her company relies more on job bank websites like 104, 1111, and so on.

Job bank websites have already become a popular platform nowadays, where a great deal of resumes can be gathered for enterprises. All the commercial banks being interviewed adopt this common recruitment channel; however, investment banks hold negative view toward it. As E1 mentioned, although the charge for service from job banks is inexpensive, they don't help companies screen out the right person. Not to mention they don't understand the financial industry and the business her company does at all.

4. Headhunter

Headhunters play an important role for enterprises that are looking for people with some degree of work history. Thus, they are more than perfect to function as a recruitment channel of middle managers. This channel is usually used when the vacancy is hard to fill, because they know more people and have abundant information. Moreover, E1 mentioned there is sophisticated division of labor in headhunters, for instance, the headhunter that E company works with has a team specially focusing on serving foreign banks, which makes it much more professional than job banks.

5. Direct contact

When recruiters or line managers themselves know someone else working in other banks, it's very likely that they will contact the candidate directly, especially when the case is highly sensitive. Another benefit by using direct contact approach as opposed to cooperating with headhunters is the save of cost, because headhunters charge pretty highly.

6. Referral

Some banks encourage referral and recommendation from inner employees, and even offer incentive payments as an inducement. In some investment banks, it is very common to see the senior who graduates from top universities introducing the junior to the company.

7. Media

Although electronic channels are more prominent in current days and are mentioned by more interviewees, there are still some companies using newspapers and magazines to recruit from the external labor market.

D1 raised one more channel of recruiting middle managers, that is, university/ MBA programs. He further explained that MBA programs are typically set in the U.S. for people who have worked and then come back to school, so these people can come as a channel for middle management. And he indeed once used this channel in Taiwan branch.

<u>Recruitment Difficulties and Possible Solutions</u>

1. Talent competition

Banks are facing strong competition from other rivals in the labor market nowadays. One interviewee thought that the renown of the company really matters for attracting capable candidates. Therefore, his company tries to expand the scale and build reputation in Taiwan, some measures like merger and acquisition or doing social services are taken. Another interviewee said they offer higher salary than competitors do as attraction.

2. Lack of talents

Another issue being raised is that the pool of financial talents with good quality is not large enough. One interviewee even proposed that good people have already left Taiwan because there is high income tax and no enough jobs for MBAs here. In order to solve this tough problem, B1 stressed the importance of developing its own cadre, which is a solution commonly used in the financial industry. Most banks have their own “Management Assistant” program to develop people who are considered with potential. After a period of training, these elites can assume posts that are a bit junior in rank than middle management.

Interestingly, E1 had a contrary opinion. She thought that the pool of middle managers is larger than the ones of senior and entry level management. For example, when there is economic downturn, many high level managers are willing to degrade a little bit. Or, some experienced candidates who are blocked from promotion can move from one firm to another and take the post as middle managers.

In spite of this dissenting view, there is still a consensus among the rest of interviewees that it’s not as easy as thought to find talents of quality in the labor market.

Selection

The third topic is selection of middle managers, in which there are four categories that encompass 18 key concepts. These data are organized in Table 4.3

Table 4.3 Selection

Topic	Category	Concept
3. Selection	3-1 Main Tasks of Middle Managers	3-1-1 Managing people
		3-1-2 Communication
		3-1-3 Planning
		3-1-4 Controlling
	3-2 Selection Tools	3-2-1 Resume screening
		3-2-2 Interviews
		3-2-3 Tests
	3-3 Selection Criteria	3-3-1 Work experience
		3-3-2 Technical skills
		3-3-3 Language skills
		3-3-4 Communication skills
		3-3-5 Managerial skills
		3-3-6 Team spirit
		3-3-7 Entrepreneurial spirit
		3-3-8 Integrity
		3-3-9 Motives
		3-3-10 Harmony between the interviewer and the candidate
	3-4 Selection Difficulty and Possible Solution	3-4-1 Subjective judgment

Main tasks of middle managers

It's understandable that each department will require its middle manager to perform duties specific to the departmental function. However, there are still some universal tasks that middle managers do in these foreign banks no matter which department they serve. These common tasks are:

1. *Managing people*

Middle managers need to manage people, including leading and developing subordinates. C company especially stresses that a good middle manager has to talk to subordinates often for helping them understand where they need to improve and how they can achieve it. It's vital to prevent the company from talent loss.

2. *Communication*

After top management makes a strategic decision, it is middle managers that play an important role to pass it on to subordinates. In other words, they are the bridge between senior and entry level. They have to conduct upward and downward communication.

3. *Planning*

Because high-level strategic decisions made by top management are usually too abstract and rough to carry out, middle managers need to further make those decisions crystallized and specific by scheming out concrete action plans and procedures for subordinates to follow.

4. *Controlling*

Middle managers also have the responsibility for the achievement of previously set business goals. For example, they have to oversee whether the operation within the department is running smoothly or not, and to make sure subordinates are producing timely and correct work.

<u>Selection Tools</u>

1. *Resume screening*

No matter it is internal or external recruitment, the first step of selection is always filtering written documents and check whether the candidate meets basic qualifications of this job vacancy. A few interviewees further pointed out what they pay more attention to when reviewing resumes of candidates for middle managers is their past experience.

2. Interviews

All companies adopt interviews as the main tool for selection. A1 said through the interaction between the interviewer and interviewee, it's a way for recruiters to have a better understanding of the candidate as a person and what he has experienced before.

Every company has its own unique interview procedures. Overall, superior interview is a must. As for superiors at which level the candidate needs to interview with, it depends. For example, one company incorporates interview with the regional head via video teleconferencing into the formal selection procedure. Another bank thinks telephone interview with regional head is optional for selection of managers at the middle level but is required for that of senior management. Still others don't even arrange interviews with superiors located beyond Taiwan.

Whether a candidate has to interview with the HR professional is also up to each company's unique demand. Investment banks, whose scale in Taiwan are small yet competitive, usually have a very small HR function or even have none. In this case, it is not necessary to add HR in the interview procedure.

Furthermore, although it is the superior who has the power to make final selection decisions, some HR professionals indeed perform assistant roles other than just dealing with administrative works. Some interviewees mentioned they help train line managers how to act well during interviews, including what questions they could ask and what procedures they should go through. B1 also said HR in her company can propose opinions about the candidate to line managers if she thinks the hire would be inappropriate.

3. Tests

Hereby, tests include "psychological tests" and "technical tests". First, some companies already established databank about what kind of personality is preferred for selection among job applicants. C1 explained that the reason why C company uses psychological tests is to increase the objectivity of selection. Secondly, technical tests are more commonly used for

selecting entry level employees, yet less used for regular selection of middle managers. But once in a while, A1 said, line managers would provide technical tests actively if they consider it necessary.

Besides, there is one company that uses “assessment center” for selection of important candidates like Management Assistants (MAs) or high-level international managers. Because candidates of these critical positions are potential successors who once are chosen will be invested a lot of efforts and resources for cultivation, this company would rather conduct a very detailed yet expensive evaluation to select the right elites beforehand. However, such tool isn’t applied to selection of average post candidates, including middle managers.

Selection Criteria

Most interviewed companies set selection criteria based on departmental needs and job analysis, except one company leads in the competency model and surrounds its selection and training activities with the concept of competency.

Set aside the complex institution method and process, below section elaborates common criteria that foreign banks take into consideration when selecting middle managers.

1. Work experience

Because middle managers need to lead subordinates, they must have related work experience in the past so that they understand what the front-line workers do. Especially, as A1 mentioned, companies expect candidates at managerial level to be productive as soon as they come to work. Thus, past work experience in the relevant area turns to be one crucial selection criterion.

In more detail, companies not only want to know whether the candidate has relevant work experience, but they give a lot of weight to his track record or revenue history. Past performance is especially important when considering the promotion of an inner employee to the managerial level.

2. Technical skills

Different functions require different technical skills. Sometimes technical skills can be demonstrated by certificates or licenses, for example, E1 emphasized that they only hire traders with financial licenses.

Although every interviewee mentioned about the importance of technical skills, one interviewee had a slightly distinct argument from others. Because her company encourages transfer within the enterprise, and sometimes transfer means going to work in an unfamiliar function, it would be acceptable if the transfer applicant doesn't possess the top of technical skills in the area he wants to transfer to. In such case, the company would expect the applicant to have at least half of the required technical skills, and another half of the selection criterion would be people management ability.

3. Language skills

In foreign banks, language ability is such a fundamental concern that interviewees didn't even actively mention about it until being asked. Needless to say, English proficiency is important in these companies, so that some companies arrange English interviews with superiors in Taiwan or in Asia Pacific region.

However, A company gave higher priority to past work experience or technical skills than to language skills. A1 said as long as a candidate has talents, he won't be blocked from joining the local branch if his English is not perfect. His lack of language skill will only hinder him from future opportunity of international mobility within A corporation.

4. Communication skills

As mentioned earlier, one of the main tasks of middle managers is to conduct cross-functional, upward, and downward coordination, so communication ability is a necessity.

5. Managerial skills

Since people management is a key task of middle managers, companies pay attention to the managerial ability of a candidate no matter he's from the external labor market or from the internal one. For an external candidate, A1 said they would enquire about his past experience of assuming a managerial role or that of leading any projects. For promotion of an internal candidate, C1 said if the boss thinks the candidate has the potential to lead a team, accompanying with his good performance in the past, he will be given the chance of promotion to middle management.

6. Team spirit

Most of these companies emphasize cooperation and mutual growth within the corporation. Their corporate values discourage individualism or heroics, thus they search for candidates who are good team players.

7. Entrepreneurial spirit

Interestingly, both investment banks agreed by mere coincidence that entrepreneurship including initiative and creativeness is important in their companies; whereas interviewees from commercial banks didn't even mention about it at all.

8. Integrity

Banks take integrity as a very serious issue. The higher the rank is; the more the emphasis would be put on. C1 mentioned her company asks overseas branches to conduct reference check in order to make sure the integrity of candidates.

9. Motives

Motives will be examined when selecting middle managers as well. For example, one company offers opportunities for promotion semiyearly. All applicants are asked to present their motives in proposals, and upper management along with HR will review that carefully. Moreover, when brining up the issue about international transfer, another interviewee commented that the most important factor is that the transferee himself has the intention to

work abroad.

10. Harmony between the interviewer and the candidate

Some interviewees raised this concept which is worth a discussion. D1, who acts as an interviewer all the time, gave a comment as: “If I don’t like you, even if you meet with my criteria, I don’t necessarily hire you.” In his opinion, although above criteria matter, at the end they may not matter. Selection should be viewed from a more philosophical perspective rather than in a rigid or standardized way.

There are some criteria that aren’t specially taken into account by these companies beyond expectation. One is the expatriation experience. All of them didn’t consider it a prerequisite for selection of middle managers. Some even thought it’s not necessarily always an advantage for candidates. It depends on the requirement of the vacancy and whether the expatriation experience itself is positive to the candidate. If compare this finding with Table 2.2 where “the effects of international assignments” proposed by Cullen & Parboteeah (2005) are listed, we can see the discrepancy in between. Although most of these companies have geocentric IHRM orientation (only one is regiocentric), in reality, international assignments aren’t necessarily required for career advancement to middle managers. Again, it might have something to do with the duties of mid-level management, which requires them to be responsible for and sensitive to local markets. Thus, expatriation experience doesn’t exactly so beneficial to candidates of middle managers. Maybe for the applicants of senior level management, overseas experience would really have positive implications in a company that embraces geocentric orientation.

Another criterion undervalued by these companies is family factors. Although many researchers like Dowling & Welch (2004) and Black, et al. (1999) stressed how the inclusion of family issue into selection process could enhance the success in international assignments, none of interviewed companies pay much attention to it. They ask applicants of international transfers to have introspection about their family conditions beforehand, while companies

themselves don’t take this issue as their responsibility.

Selection Difficulty and Possible Solution

When harmony between the interviewer and the candidate becomes a critical factor of selection, the subjectivity issue is raised. B1 said the most commonly-seen difficulty of selection is misjudgment, because it is not that easy to make correct judgment on a person in a short time. A1 also mentioned that although HR trains the line manager for making the interview procedure as standardized as possible, there is no way to completely make sure the interviewer follows the guideline, because he holds a norm or preference himself.

Since subjective judgment is inevitable, Trompenaars & Woolliams (2003) once remarked that “In observing human reality, it is inter-subjectivity that comes closest to inaccessible objectivity.” Accordingly, a combination of multiple selection tools or sources might increase objectivity. Not only are psychological tests helpful like C1 said, but also take various opinions from different judges like HR or other superiors into consideration might help.

Training

Training is the fourth topic to be discussed. There are categories ranging from needs assessment to training difficulties as Table 4.4 shows below:

Table 4.4 Training

Topic	Category	Concept
4. Training	4-1 Needs Assessment	4-1-1 Appraisal systems
		4-1-2 Survey
		4-1-3 Self-evaluation
	4-2 Orientation	
	4-3 On-The-Job Training	4-3-1 Mentoring
		4-3-2 Consultation
	4-4 E-Learning	4-4-1 Intranet
		4-4-2 Video teleconferencing
	4-5 Classroom Training	4-5-1 At the regional training center
		4-5-2 At local site
	4-6 Off-Site Training	
	4-7 Training for expatriates' Family	
	4-8 Training Evaluation	4-8-1 Reaction
		4-8-2 Learning
		4-8-3 Transfer
	4-9 Training Difficulties and Possible Solutions	4-9-1 Lack of budget
		4-9-2 Employees lack willingness

Some of these foreign banks do not have the training function in Taiwan due to the small scale of Taiwan branch. Therefore, they rely on the training centers located in Hong Kong or

Singapore, as well as other resources within or beyond their corporations.

The rest of the interviewed companies do have training teams. However, how functional these training teams are depends on how important these Taiwan branches perceive training is. More details are described in the following section.

Needs Assessment

1. Appraisal systems

Some companies do regular performance appraisals to identify the performance gap of each employee. If training is a way to eliminate the gap, the superior will suggest the subordinate to take certain courses for the sake of improvement. This information will be further collected by HR as training needs. Only if the need for one course is large enough will HR open this training session internally.

Besides the performance appraisal system, there is one company that has another unique on-line assessment program, which is used annually to evaluate the strengths instead of deficiencies of employees. This company focuses more on how to help employees bring their strengths into full play than on mending their shortcomings. Such strength-based program can help the company sift out elites with high potentials, who will be given special programs for training and development afterwards.

2. Survey

Whenever there is a new financial product developed, HR or the training team will ask for opinions from the front-line or departmental heads with regard to whether there is a need for training, how many people need to be trained, and in what way should the course be delivered.

3. Self-evaluation

Above mentioned two methods of collecting training needs are mainly for initiating new courses by the HR or training department. However, as mentioned earlier, many foreign

banks in Taiwan rely on various resources existing within or out of the corporation. When this is the case, whether there is a need for attending a course comes from the employee himself sometimes. If the employee feels he isn't strong enough in a particular area and there are already attainable resources, he can propose his needs and interests to the departmental head and get approval for registration of those courses.

None of them conduct needs assessment before running orientation programs, which is based on the assumption that new comers are totally unaware of the new working environment thus have the needs to learn. The content often delivered in orientation is described in the next part.

Orientation

For those who are newly employed, a company profile will be provided, including organizational goals, structure, code of conduct, and so on. These commercial banks usually arrange one-on-one orientation delivered by HR or the superior. C1 explained that the reason why they don't hold formal orientation is because middle managers aren't recruited collectively. When there is only one new employee enters the company at the moment, private introduction is enough.

On the contrary, investment banks have a totally different way. They regard Asia Pacific region as one unit, and all the new employees across the region are trained together. One way is to call on video teleconferences periodically in which the regional training center arranges overseas lecture. Another way is to send employees abroad to the regional training center. For example, in E company, new employees accept orientation for two weeks both in Taiwan and Hong Kong. Moreover, for employees who get promotion, E company also gather those promoted up to the same level in the Asia Pacific region for a one-week orientation in Hong Kong or Singapore. As D2 commented, holding collective orientation by the region is more cost effective and also is helpful to make sure the cultural consistency within overseas

branches.

On-The-Job Training

1. Mentoring

Mentoring refers to an established employee guides the development of a less-experienced worker or portege, which can increase employees' competencies, achievement, and understanding of the organization (Jackson & Schuler, 2003, p.375).

In one company, there isn't a formal mentoring system in Taiwan branch yet, but some superiors will assign mentors to newly-employed workers. In another company, mentoring is only applied for elites sifted out according to their strengths and potentials.

2. Consultation

When middle managers meet a certain incidence on the job, they can consult senior bankers actively. Thus, they can learn from the wisdom of the more experienced ones. Take C company for example, each departmental head is taught to train and develop his subordinates without sparing. D2 also mentioned that they can approach local compliance officer whenever they meet legal problems on dealings.

Furthermore, because investment banks have such high mobility that employees travel to other countries a lot, D1 thought that sending a middle manager on a business trip can be sorted as on-the-job training as well. In this way, employees are given exposure to many countries to get a feel how these places work. Market knowledge is what they learn by doing.

E-Learning

1. Intranet

Each interviewed company has its own global learning resource provided by the HQs. This global intranet system carries abundant content ranging from managerial courses to financial products. An employee can choose on-line courses he wants to attend as long as

being approved by his superior. Sometimes the superior will assign such courses to the subordinate if necessary.

However, there are some limits of web-based learning. For example, courses about interpersonal skills that require face-to-face interactions are not supposed to be delivered through intranet. Also, if the newly developed financial product is so crucial to the revenue of the company, it is preferred to conduct face-to-face training accompanying with real-time discussion between the trainer and trainees.

It is noteworthy that only one interviewee expressed that the training team in Taiwan also develops on-line sessions. As for other companies' Taiwanese branches, they do not have the capability to design on-line training courses on their own, thus they heavily count on the global intranet resource.

2. Video teleconferencing

It is investment banks who have no training team in Taiwan adopt this training method more often. They are smaller in scale but more flexible in operation, which includes training. Video teleconferences for training can be initiated by HQs, regional HQs or training centers. Interviewees illustrated some occasions of holding such kind of training sessions, such as the HQs has revised the operational system so that employees all over the world can update their skills via video teleconferencing, or if an expert in Singapore would like to present the latest trend in his specialized domain, employees in other branches could enjoy knowledge sharing through this synchronizing channel as well.

<u>Classroom Training</u>

1. At the regional training center

All companies interviewed send their middle managers to Hong Kong or Singapore to take overseas training courses once in a while. Again, investment banks are more dependent on regional training centers than commercial banks do. That is, middle managers working in

the former have more opportunities to learn abroad.

2. At local site

Both investment banks have their senior managers or experts in a certain area fly over to overseas branches around the world to deliver face-to-face seminars. For instance, E1 expressed she had arranged three seminars last year, in which senior managers from London went on their round to Asia Pacific region to give speeches. Because the cost of sending lecturers abroad is high, usually it is when the newly developed product or knowledge really matters to the company that this method is adopted.

Some commercial banks develop in-house classroom training either on their own or through cooperation with external agencies. B1 insisted that training about soft skills should be held within the corporation, which allows HR to monitor the quality of the lecture and whether the course design or lecturer fits the culture and need of B company.

Off-Site Training

The majority of these companies allow employees to take external courses. Because each department is suggested to budget for training needs outside the company, employees can search for the courses they'd like to attend and ask for reimbursement from the company.

B1 thought that technical training is especially suitable for the off-site format. Because everyone has his unique knowledge base and needs, it would be better if each person go find the most appropriate course for himself provided by professional agencies like "Taiwan Academy of Banking and Finance". However, D1 had a totally different viewpoint from this. D company doesn't cooperate with external agencies at all, since they have doubts about whether external consultants and schools really understand their business and culture. They'd better leave the responsibility for designing courses to their education centers around the world.

Training for expatriates' family

Some companies provide training to the family of expatriates. Before the international assignment, HR may offer the transferee and his family some pre-departure information about the environmental condition of the country they are heading for. After their arrival, HR in the host country may introduce them to external language learning resources. However, there is no systematic training program designed and offered to expatriates' family proactively, these training activities only occur "by request".

The rest of these companies only provide monetary assistance to expatriates and their family, such as covering their expenditures in children education, accommodations, etc. One of them also involves expatriates' family into its Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Yet when it comes to training for the family, they ask the family of the expatriate to help themselves.

In sum, although researchers like Bauer & Taylor (2001) keep stressing how such training can enhance the adjustment of the family and thus increase the success of international assignments, most companies haven't paid too much attention to this area yet.

Training Evaluation

Most of them do not evaluate the effectiveness of orientation. C1 said the performance of an employee after orientation is already a kind of evaluation. D2 further explained that orientation is regarded as a routine procedure in general, thus they don't particularly follow up the results.

As for evaluation of other kinds of training programs, it can be organized by a four-level evaluation model once proposed by Kirkpatrick; namely, reaction, learning, transfer, and business results (Driscoll, 2002, p.246). These companies at most make training evaluation up to the third level as below describes:

1. Reaction

A reaction sheet is provided to learners in order to measure their satisfaction with the course, including how they feel about the content that has just been delivered and the lecturer who delivered it, what they think they lack the most after taking the course, and so forth. Such kind of feedback is usually questioned after classroom training; it's less often collected in the case of on-line training.

2. Learning

Level two is measuring how much of the content a learner has mastered based on the course objectives. For example, D company gives on-line quizzes after web-based training session to test and grade what employees have learned. In C company, a certain kinds of classes are evaluated by simulation testing, in which learners are asked to practice the knowledge or skill just learned in front of evaluators.

3. Transfer

Some companies did measure the amount of skills and knowledge learners were able to apply on the job after the course. Usually the training team would collect opinions from the line manager who watched the learner's behavior for modifying future training arrangements.

Others who didn't do evaluation at this level gave reasons like they didn't have enough manpower to keep an eye on learners' following condition after the course, or it was difficult to observe managerial behaviors of middle managers as opposed to technical behaviors of front-line employees.

<u>Training Difficulties and Possible Solutions</u>

1. Lack of budget

Some interviewees mentioned that Taiwan branch has limited training resources. One said that since local branches are responsible for their profit and loss, sometimes local management is not willing to invest in training activities which cost a lot. Another one stated

their company couldn’t see the connection between training and profit increase, thus stopped running the training center in Taiwan three years ago. Under such circumstances, what HR can do is trying to find inexpensive training sources from the government or outside agencies.

2. Employees lack willingness

This kind of difficulty usually occurs when the courses are compulsory like orientation, safety training or other courses assigned by superiors. Some employees think they are too busy and exhausted to take additional burdens besides workload at hand. So HR has to play the role as a coordinator who communicates the importance of the class to the trainee, and also as a gatekeeper to check on the quality of the lecturer and course content in advance to let trainees feel worth attending the course.